

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 484

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ANTANANARIVO 809

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASIG
SUBJ: INSPECTION OF AF/E POSTS: SUBMISSION OF POST MEMORANDUM

REF: (A) STATE 103648; (B) STATE 112990

THERE FOLLOWS THIS MISSION'S POST MEMORANDUM REQUESTED BY
REFTELS IN PREPARATION FOR THE INSPECTORS. THIS MEMORANDUM IS DIVIDED
INTO TWO PARTS, ONE FOR EACH OF THE COUNTRIES TO WHICH THIS EMBASSY
IS ACCREDITED.

POST MEMORANDUM: MADAGASCAR

1. GENERAL STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

UNITED STATES RELATIONS WITH MADAGASCAR ARE AT A STANDSTILL. A SERIES
OF ACTIONS BY THE NEW SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR
(DRM), ESTABLISHED IN 1975, INCLUDING TAKEOVER OF A NASA STATION,
REFUSAL OF AGREEMENT TO AN AMERICAN AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTEE, NATIONAL-
IZATION OF AMERICAN COMPANIES, AND EXPULSION OF US PERSONNEL, LED
IN LATE 1976 TO A USG DECISION NOT TO APPOINT A NEW AMBASSADOR AND
TO ALLOW OUR RELATIONS TO REMAIN AT THE CHARGE LEVEL. SINCE THAT TIME

THE DRM HAS SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO MAKE ANY EFFORT TOWARD IMPROVED
RELATIONS, BEYOND PRO FORMA EXPRESSIONS OF GOODWILL,
TAKING THE POSITION THAT IT IS UP TO THE US TO
TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARD BETTER RELATIONS BY THE APPOINTMENT
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OF AN AMBASSADOR. FOR ITS PART THE USG HAS ENDEAVORED TO SHOW,
BY ACTIONS IN THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FIELDS,
THAT IT IS ENTIRELY PREPARED TO ENTERTAIN A BETTER RELATIONSHIP,
BUT THAT THIS MUST BE THE RESULT OF A JOINT EFFORT, NOT OF
UNILATERAL AMERICAN CONCESSIONS.

2. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

A) NASA

THE MAIN PROBLEM STANDING IN THE WAY OF IMPROVED US/DRM RELATIONS IS THE CONTINUED ABSENCE OF A SETTLEMENT OF THE SITUATION CREATED BY THE 1975 DRM TAKEOVER OF THE NASA STATION, WHICH HAD BEEN OPERATING HERE SINCE 1964. WE HAVE TOLD THE MALAGASY AUTHORITIES THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO LEAVE TO THEM THE BULK OF THE STATION EQUIPMENT BUT WOULD LIKE TO RECOVER SOME OF THE SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT. THE DRM INSISTS FOR ITS PART THAT WE ALSO MAKE A PAYMENT TO IT FOR RETROACTIVE RENT, A DISPUTED ISSUE WHICH LED TO THE CLOSURE OF THE STATION. WE ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER A LIMITED PAYMENT IN ORDER TO CLOSE OUT THE ISSUE BUT WILL NOT COMMIT OURSELVES TO ANY SPECIFIC AMOUNT UNTIL WE HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO INSPECT THE STATION AND ASSESS THE STATE OF THE MATERIAL TO BE RECOVERED. THE DRM ON THE OTHER HAND HAS SO FAR REFUSED US PERMISSION TO INSPECT THE STATION UNLESS WE FIRST COMMIT OURSELVES TO A SET PAYMENT. MEANWHILE THE STATION HAS BEEN DETERIORATING SINCE 1975 AND ITS EQUIPMENT BECOMING INCREASINGLY OBSOLETE. IN AN EFFORT TO MOVE THE DRM OFF ITS INTRANSIGENT STAND WE ASKED NASA LAST JANUARY TO DRAW UP A LIST OF THE SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT AT THE STATION, SPECIFYING THAT WHICH IT WANTED TO RECUPERATE AND THAT WHICH COULD BE LEFT TO THE DRM. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT THIS LIST IS PRESENTLY UNDERGOING INTERDEPARTMENTAL CLEARANCE IN WASHINGTON. WHEN IT IS RECEIVED WE HOPE THAT ITS SUBMISSION TO THE DRM, BY SPECIFYING THE SCIENTIFIC ACQUISITIONS WHICH WOULD ACCRUE TO IT IN THE CASE OF A SETTLEMENT, WILL EN-

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COURAGE IT TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON THE ISSUE OF INSPECTION AND PAYMENT. WE HAVE LET IT BE KNOWN THAT A SETTLEMENT OF THIS ISSUE IS A MINIMUM PREREQUISITE FOR THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS.

B) OTHER SUBSTANTIVE BILATERAL ISSUES

OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES ARE LESS CLEARCUT AND OF LESSER IMPORTANCE. THE TWO AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES NATIONALIZED IN 1976 ARE ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF THE FOREIGN COMPANIES NATIONALIZED OVER THEPAST THREE YEARS, AND SETTLEMENT OF ALL THE RESULTING CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION IS EXPECTED TO TAKE A LONG TIME UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. AN AMERICAN CITIZEN HAS BEEN IN PRISON FOR OVER A YEAR FOR ILLEGAL OVERFLIGHT AND ENTRY INTO MADAGASCAR, AND WAS RECENTLY TRIED AND SETENCED TO FIVE YEARS. THE CASE IS BEING APPEALES THROUGH BOTH JUDICIAL AND POLITICAL CHANNELS AND WE HOPE TO GET THE SENTENCE REDUCED. AS THE PRISONER JUMPED BAIL IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ENTERED THE COUNTRY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN AIRCRAFT, THERE HAVE BEEN POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN HIS CASE. MINOR HARRASSMENT OF AMERICANS HAS DECREASED. ALTHOUGH THE REGIME'S INFORMATION OUTPUT CONTINUES TO HAVE AN ANTI-WEST BIAS, THERE HAS BEEN A DECLINE FROM THE HIGH LEVEL OF ATTACKS SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT THE US WHICH WERE PREVALENT IN THE GOVERNMENT MEDIA IN 1975 AND 1976. OUR HISTORICAL UNFAVORABLE BALANCE OF TRADE WITH MADAGASCAR MAY BE AMELIORATED THIS YEAR BY LARGE SCALE

MALAGASY PURCHASES OF US AIRCRAFT AND CAPITAL EQUIPMENT.

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C. ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

THIS MINIMALLY MANNED POST CAN EFFECTIVELY PURSUE ITS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ONLY WHEN IT IS AT FULL STRENGTH. UNFORTUNATELY THERE ARE MANY UNAVOIDABLE GAPS SUCH AS THOSE OCCURRING UPON TRANSFER, OR BECAUSE OF HOME AND LOCAL LEAVE AND R&R, ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES, ILLNESS, ETC. THESE USED TO BE RENDERED MORE TOLERABLE, AT LEAST IN THE SECRETARIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND C&R FIELDS, BY THE ROVER SYSTEM OF TDY ASSIGNMENT. UNFORTUNATELY THE SYSTEM BROKE DOWN IN RECENT MONTHS AND THIS EMBASSY HAS MORE OFTEN BEEN UNDER STRENGTH THAN NOT. WHILE "ROVERS" ARE PROBABLY NOT FEASIBLE IN SUBSTANTIVE FIELDS, THE PROBLEM THERE COULD BE RELIEVED BY MAKING SURE THERE ARE NO TRANSFER GAPS IN SUCH SMALL POSTS AS THIS ONE.

3. EVALUATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF POLICIES OR PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN MADAGASCAR ARE BOTH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL, CONCERNING ON ONE HAND US/MALAGASY RELATIONS AND ON THE OTHER MADAGASCAR'S OVERALL ORIENTATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE MILITARY FIELD. WHILE WE HAVE MADE NO VISIBLE PROGRESS IN IMPROVING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS IN RECENT YEARS, WE CAN TAKE SOME SATISFACTION, BUT NO CREDIT, IN THE FACT THAT THE SAME PERIOD HAS REVEALED AN INCREASED WARINESS ON THE PART OF MADAGASCAR TOWARD CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION. THIS HAS BEEN LARGELY THE RESULT OF A) INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS SUCH AS THE OPPORTUNISM SHOWN BY THE SOVIETS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, PARTICULARLY THE ABANDONMENT OF SOMALIA WITH WHICH MADAGASCAR HAS HAD A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP.

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B) SOVIET NIGGARDLINESS AND DIFFICULT CHINESE CONDITIONS IN THE GRANTING OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND C) THE SUCCESS OF WESTERN EUROPE, LED BY FRANCE, USING ITS ECONOMIC AND HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIPS HERE TO WIELD A FAVORABLE INFLUENCE ON THE DRM'S FOREIGN POLICY. THE SUCCESS OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN EFFORTS WAS MARKED IN 1977 BY REASSERTION OF FRANCE'S ROLE AS THE LARGEST SINGLE CONTRIBUTOR TO MALAGASY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND BY PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA'S PUBLIC REINTERATION THAT MADAGASCAR WOULD ALLOW NO WARSHIPS OF SUPERPOWERS TO CALL IN MALAGASY PORTS. AS OUR SINGLE BIGGEST INTEREST HERE IS TO KEEP THE SOVIETS FROM USING THE PORTS AND AIRFIELDS OF MADAGASCAR, WHICH ARE SO STRATEGICALLY PLACED ON THE SUPERTANKER ROUTE TO THE WEST, THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT SIGNALS, IF ONLY TEMPORARILY, ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS OBJECTIVE.

IN THE BILATERAL FIELD WE CONTINUE AN IMPORTANT CULTURAL PROGRAM HERE AND LIMITED HUMANITARIAN AID TO INDICATE OUR CONTINUED WILLINGNESS TO ENTERTAIN BETTER RELATIONS. WE ALSO CONSULT WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, HERE AND IN NEW YORK, CONCERNING MULTILATERAL ISSUES. OUR EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE THE POLICY OF THE DRM ARE NECESSARILY LOW KEYED IN VIEW OF THE INACTIVE STATE OF OUR RELATIONS, BUT MALAGASY AUTHORITIES ARE WELL AWARE OF OUR AND THE WEST'S INTEREST IN THEIR CONTINUED MILITARY NON-ALIGNMENT.

BECAUSE OF OUR INTEREST IN MADAGASCAR'S MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS AND BECAUSE OUR CULTURAL PROGRAM IS THE PRINCIPLE ACTIVITY THE US HAS GOING HERE, THE TWO OTHER (NON-STATE) -GENCIES PRESENT IN ANTANANARIVO CONTRIBUTE IMPORTANTLY TO OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES. THE DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE PROVIDES TRAINED OBSERVERS TO FOLLOW MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS-- THE PRESENCE OF DAO IS ALL THE MORE USEFUL IN THAT MANY OF THE LEADING FIGURES IN THE DRM ARE MILITARY AND A DAO'S NORMAL CONTACTS CAN THUS PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL SCENE. AND THE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER, RUN BY ICA, REMAINS THE ONE HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL

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VISIBLE SIGN OF US INTEREST IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH MADAGASCAR.

POST MEMORANDUM: COMOROS

1. GENERAL STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS
US RELATIONS WITH THE COMOROS, FORMALLY ESTABLISHED ON AUGUST 15, 1977, ARE STILL IN THEIR FORMATIVE STATES. THE CHARGE HAS MADE THREE TRIPS TO THE SMALL ARCHIPELAGO STATE AND ON THE MOST RECENT ONE COMMITTED THE US TO A FOOD AID PROGRAM, THE FIRST ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE USG, EXCEPT FOR A SMALL DISASTER RELIEF CONTRIBUTION MADE IN EARLY 1976. THE COMORIAN FOREIGN MINISTER IS IN NEW YORK FOR THE SECOND TIME SINCE RECOGNITION AND IS MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE. THE COMORIAN

GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE, IN VIEW OF ITS DIRE ECONOMIC STRAITS, AND A GESGU OF MORAL SUPPORT FROM THE USG IN ORDER EIGHER TO PREVENT A MOVE OF DESPERATION INTO THE DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION OR TO MAKE THE ACCEPTANCE OF SOVIET AID LESS DANGEROUS. THE SOVIETS THEMSELVES CONTINUE TO BE INTERESTED IN USING COMORIAN ANCHORAGES AND IN ESTABLISHING A RESIDENT EMBASSY IN THE CAPITAL OF MORONI-- THE ONLY TWO EMBASSIES THERE AT PRESENT ARE THE CHINESE AND THE SENNGALESE.

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2. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

A) COMORIAN NEED FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

THE COMOROS USED TO BE ALMOST ENTIRELY SUPPORTED BY FRANCE BUT RELATIONS WERE COMPLETELY SEVERED AT INDEPENDENCE IN 1975 WHEN THE ISLAND OF MAYOTTE WAS KEPT BY A SEPARATE REFERENDUM FROM BECOMING PART OF THE NEW COMORIAN REPUBLIC. THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS NOW GETTING HELP FROM VARIOUS ARAB STATES, CHINA, THE UN, AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. BUT IT STILL NEEDS MORE UNTIL AND UNLESS THE US PROVIDES SOME SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE BEYOND THE FOOD AID, ALREADY PROFFERED, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH INTERNATIONAL DONOR INSTITUTIONS, WE WILL NOT HAVE A COMFORTABLE RELATIONSHIP OR BE ABLE TO PURSUE OUR OTHER OBJECTIVES IN ANY DIRECT FASHION. THE COMORIANS BELIEVE A NATION AS RICH AS THE US SHOULD BE ABLE TO SPARE THE SMALL AMOUNT WHICH WOULD BE A REAL HELP TO THEM. THEY ALSO FEEL THAT THEIR LOCATION ON THE SUPERTANKER ROUTE RENDERS THEM SUBJECT TO SOVIET COVETOUSNESS AND WORTH DEFENDING BY THE WEST.

B) OTHERS

THE COMORIANS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO BELABOR US, AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST, TO OBTAIN OUR SUPPORT IN THEIR DEMAND THAT FRANCE CEDE THE ISLAND OF MAYOTTE TO THE YOUNG REPUBLIC. HOWEVER, THEY PROBABLY UNDERSTAND THAT WE WILL NOT PRESSURE FRANCE FOR THIS PURPOSE AND THEIR ENTREATIES ARE PROBABLY ONLY FOR THE RECORD.

THEY WILL PROBABLY ALSO CONTINUE TO COMPLAIN OF LACK OF CONTACT WITH THE USG, BUT THIS SHOULD HOPEFULLY DIMINISH WITH MORE FREQUENT TRIPS FROM THIS MISSION TO THE COMOROS AND MORE CONTACTS IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON BETWEEN COMORIAN AND US OFFICIALS.
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3. EVALUATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF POLICIES OR PROGRAM
OBJECTIVES

IT IS TOO EARLY TO EVALUATE HOW WE ARE DOING IN THE PURSUIT OF OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. AT THE UN THE COMORIANS HAVE JUST AS OFTEN VOTED AGAINST US AS NOT, BUT HAVE A BETTER RECORD THAN MADAGASCAR. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A US ECONOMIC AID PROGRAM WOULD ENABLE US TO MAKE A BETTER CASE FOR OUR INTERESTS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. THE YOUNG REPUBLICS AVOIDANCE SO FAR OF CLOSE TIES WITH THE SOVIETS SEEMS TO BE A RESULT OF FEAR AND TREPIDATION, HOPE THAT TNHE US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES WILL COME THROUGH WITH SUBSTANTIAL AID, AND DESIRE NOT TO OFFEND CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES WHO ARE ALREADY SUPPLYING ASSISTANCE AND PRESENTLY CONSIDERING THE COMORIAN REPUBLICS APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE ARAB LEAGUE.
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